

Measuring the Social Impact of Migration at a Local Authority Level

Executive Summary



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Research Summary

Social research

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Aims and objectives of the research

The principal objective of the research was to consider the social impact of migration at a local authority level in three case study local areas. The three local authorities chosen for the case studies were Carmarthenshire, Newport and Wrexham.

The research focussed on migrant workers from the A8 Accession States (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) but it also involved migrants from other countries.

The project involved an extensive review of previous research work in this area, interviews with staff from local authorities and other public and private sector organisations and interviews with migrant workers in each of the case study areas.

A combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with over 70 representatives from the local authorities and other agencies working with or for migrant workers. The research also sought the views of over 80 migrant workers. The data were collected between February and May 2008

Dadansodi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy

One major difficulty is the uncertainty concerning the numbers of migrant workers that have arrived in particular local authority areas. The two main sources of this information are the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) and National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations. While these give some idea of overall figures, they do not give an exact figure since not all A8 migrant workers register under the two schemes and there is no record of those who do register but leave the country. A further difficulty facing local authorities is that migrant workers may register in one locality but subsequently move to another.

Of all the Welsh local authorities, Carmarthenshire has attracted the greatest number of A8 migrant workers, particularly in Llanelli and the surrounding area. The largest group are Polish but there are also several other nationalities. A number of issues have arisen for public services, particularly in the Roman Catholic schools concerning funding and the number of teachers with specialist skills. Carmarthenshire County Council has established a Task Group to respond to the policy demands of this situation. Newport has also experienced increased migration, particularly from Poland, but there is less information both on numbers and on the conditions in which these workers find themselves. Problems have been noted in the area of housing but there is little information on the policy areas of education, health and community cohesion. Newport has a history of immigration and the local authority has to some extent included recent economic migrants in existing programmes working with refugees and asylum seekers. There is a need for more research to be carried out in Newport to provide a more in depth understanding of this case study area.

Wrexham has a significant migrant population with Polish being the largest nationality. The County Borough Council has developed an extensive programme to integrate the newcomers and is working with a wide network of voluntary and business groups to ensure that this happens. The Council and its statutory and voluntary sector partners have developed a number of initiatives such as information leaflets and language courses to assist inclusion.

The UK Accession (Immigration and Worker Registration) Regulations 2004 allows A8 nationals access to benefits and housing support on the same basis as other EEA (European Economic Area¹) workers, while they are working. But A8 nationals who are not working are not generally entitled to such support. A8 nationals only acquire full Treaty rights, including access to benefits, once they have been working in the UK continuously for a period of at least 12 months.

Increasing short-term migration has led to some concerns about the economic costs, as well as benefits, associated with this phenomenon. While individual migrant workers are less likely than the host community to use public services, the overall number of migrant workers has led to some increase in demand, particularly for translation services.

The educational and skills profile of immigration has changed with the arrival of recent migrant workers from the A8 countries. A8 migrant workers to the UK have been primarily young with high levels of education and skills, relative to the native population (Audit Commission, 2007:12; Schneider and Holman, 2005). Many are employed in occupations that are not commensurate with their qualifications. The majority are either unmarried or, if they are married, are not accompanied by dependents. Nevertheless, it is possible that some will be joined by dependants at a later date as they become more settled (Audit Commission, 2007).

The data from WRS figures provide a picture of the national background and demographic characteristics of these migrant workers, their declared reason for coming to the UK, the kinds of work in which they are employed and their geographical locations in the UK.

The majority of those registered in Wales are working in “administration, business and management services” with only 3% in agriculture (but the majority of those in the administration business and management sector work for recruitment agencies and could be employed in a variety of industries).

¹ The EEA countries include the 27 EU member states plus three of the four countries of the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The fourth member, Switzerland, decided in a referendum not to join the association.

Geographical locations of A8 migrant workers: Wales and the UK as a whole

Although previous migration tended to be concentrated in London, the A8 inflows have favoured both Anglia (15% of the total) and the Midlands (13%) with London in third place (12%). Wales has been the least favoured destination in all of the UK with only about 3% of A8 migrants moving there (Home Office, 2007: 18). In Wales, 20,735 A8 migrant workers registered on the WRS between 1 May 2004 and 31 December 2007. Four local authorities in Wales have been the main destinations of these workers. (The figures for those registering between 1 May 2004 and 30 March 2007 were: Carmarthenshire (2,635), Wrexham (2,565), Newport (2,405) and Cardiff (1,855) (WAG, 2007: 4).) However, these figures simply record those registered to work for employers in these areas and may not represent the actual number of migrants working there. Those who initially registered may have returned home and there may be other A8 nationals working in these areas who have not registered.

Information and guidance

Previous research on migrant workers shows that there has been a lack of guidance on basic advice about many aspects of living in the UK; not only how to obtain a bank account, but also information on legal advice, employment rules and regulations, rights and responsibilities, health and education services, and taxation. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG, 2006) has produced an information pack for new entrants in twenty different languages. Some local authorities have produced their own sets of welcome information.

Case Study Carmarthenshire

WRS data for Carmarthenshire showed that in 2007 Poles made up 94% of the total migrant workers. Over three quarters (77%) of migrant workers registered to work in Carmarthenshire are working somewhere within the Llanelli area (postcode SA15). Over two thirds (69%) of migrant workers

registered to work in Carmarthenshire work as “process operatives” (that is, as factory workers), 4% as packers, and 4% as care assistants and home carers. Information from the Welsh Assembly Government indicates that there were 2,635 WRS applications approved between May 2004 and 31 March 2007 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007: 4).

Carmarthenshire County Council’s Scrutiny Committee set up a Task and Finish Group in 2006 to obtain better information about numbers of migrant workers and the potential impact on services and communities. The report (Carmarthenshire County Council (2008)) includes a detailed analysis of new GP registrations by foreign nationals, by country of origin, based on National Public Health Service for Wales data. There is also a report of a fact finding visit to the Dunbia meat processing firm, and reviews of ESOL provision, and of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service. The latter provides support in schools for children of foreign nationals.

Accommodation

Migrant workers in Carmarthenshire tend to live in rented accommodation either tied to their employment or privately rented through a managing agent or landlord. Very few have bought their own homes and none of the migrant workers that we interviewed were living in council or social housing. One Polish migrant family reported receiving housing benefits.

The most common example of tied accommodation in Carmarthenshire is of migrant workers employed through an employment agency, which owns and rents various properties to its migrant worker employees, deducting the rent from their wages. One of these properties was referred to as “*the Polish Hotel*” by migrant workers; (it had at one time been a hotel but had been converted to hostel-type accommodation by an employment agency that recruited in Poland). The researchers were told by Polish migrant workers that some migrant workers move into privately rented accommodation as soon as they can, either to reduce their costs or to improve their standard of accommodation.

Health

Overall, the health services are proactive in dealing with migrant worker issues. In January 2008 the Local Health Board (LHB), in conjunction with the Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS), launched a booklet called 'A friendly guide to your local health services'. This booklet is available in English and in Welsh, both versions containing a Polish translation. The booklet contains easy to understand information about the health services, what is available and the various processes a person has to go through when using the health services.

According to the health services, the only barrier faced by migrant workers accessing the health care system is the language barrier. When a migrant worker has little or no English language ability it can be very difficult for them to communicate what they want.

Education

Locally, the planning of education has taken account of the number of migrant workers. There are now over 70 children from migrant worker families (not just those from A8 countries) in Llanelli primary and secondary schools.

The Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) provides specialist support for pupils whose first language is neither English nor Welsh and who need support for English as an Additional Language (EAL). MEAS actively seeks data on all minority ethnic pupils in schools to ensure that EAL needs are clearly identified. The service is financed by an annual grant from the WAG based on a survey of EAL pupils which is undertaken by MEAS staff.

Migrant workers who were interviewed felt that they must learn English because they were in the UK. Difficulties in communicating at the bank or post office were mentioned. Many rely on the volunteers at the Polish Welsh Mutual Association to translate documents. Most migrant workers have attended English classes at some point.

Community issues

In general migrant workers seem to settle into living in Carmarthenshire quite well, making friends with other migrant workers and Welsh people alike. They say that many people are friendly towards them and smile and say hello. They also generally feel safe here. However, they do experience some racism, verbal abuse, and vandalism.

Case Study: Newport

Newport has relatively long standing Pakistani, Bengali and Afro-Caribbean communities resident in the Pill (Docks) area of the city, although other areas of the city such as Victoria and Stow Hill also have significant minority ethnic communities. Newport is an asylum seekers dispersal area, which has added to the diversity of its population.

Most of the migrant workers interviewed said they had already had either a friend or family member living and working in the Newport area, which is why they decided to come to Newport. Migrant workers interviewed said they were working in food distribution and packing, the hospitality industry, construction or factory work.

Accommodation

Migrant workers find accommodation through various avenues, including employment (tied accommodation); letting agencies; and informal networks (friends/family). When migrant workers first arrive in the area they tend to stay with friends or family members until they have secured their own accommodation.

Low-cost private rental housing, and houses of multiple occupation, (HMOs) are typical of the accommodation accessed by migrant workers.

There have been reports from other agencies of migrant workers living in extremely poor accommodation and suffering overcrowding. For example, in one property, which was closed down, there were 28 Czechs living in a two bedroom apartment.

Health

Migrant workers interviewed reported accessing healthcare services in Newport, most specifically general practitioners (GPs). The majority of migrant workers interviewed said they were registered with an NHS GP, but very few with an NHS dental practice. Some migrant workers who were not registered with a GP said that they would go to hospital if they had a health problem.

The main issue faced by service providers is the language barrier. Linked to this is the cost of using Language Line, which places pressure on their budget. It was also noted that frontline staff need to be trained in using interpreters and that the interpreters themselves need to be trained to remain objective in sensitive situations and avoid using jargon.

Education

In the field of education the greatest impact as a result of migrant workers and their families moving in to the Newport area has been experienced by the Primary Schools. The Catholic schools have been particularly affected because of the high numbers of Polish people in the area. Schools within the Pill area have also experienced substantial impact due to migrant workers settling in the area. More resources and support have been allocated to these schools to cope with the extra demand and requirements, however, resources are stretched and GEMSS (Gwent Education Multi-Ethnic Support Service) and a school said that additional resources/funding would be welcomed.

Community issues

The arrival of migrant workers in Newport over the past four years has added to the already diverse population. There were mixed views as to whether local existing communities accepted migrant workers into the community, but it was felt that migrant workers had not fully integrated into the community. It was felt that in areas where the existing population was not as diverse, such

as the Valleys, the arrival of migrant workers would have a greater impact on the local community.

Case Study: Wrexham

The Migrant Worker Action Plan (WCBC, 2007) recognises that there has been a significant impact on public services and on two services in particular: education and public protection² (WCBC, 2007: 1). Two voluntary organisations working with migrant workers, the Caia Park Partnership (CPP) and the Citizens' Advice Bureau have also reported increasing service pressure due to the growth in numbers of migrant workers (ibid.). The CPP is currently working in partnership with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to develop a model for local integration and with the Wrexham County Borough Council to develop a toolkit for integration. Printed copies of the toolkit have been distributed. The Council led multi-agency Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group monitors migrant worker issues as part of its remit.

Informing migrant workers about services

The increase in the number of migrant workers moving into Wrexham has taken place at the same time as WCBC has established a Community Cohesion team. The topic of migrant workers features high on the agenda for this team, along with overcoming the effects of other potential social divisions. Members of the Community Cohesion team are represented on a number of action groups and informal discussion forums with other representatives from the private, public and voluntary sectors. It was noted during interviews with the local authority that this team helps to co-ordinate of much of the work to integrate migrant workers, including sharing information and promoting a more consistent approach to the treatment of newcomers to Wrexham from the A8 states.

² Public protection includes Environmental Health and Trading Standards services.

Information provision has been an important part of the strategy employed by WCBC. The Council has produced an information booklet, containing advice about settling into the area, and has supplied copies to specific agencies and public services that are used by migrant workers in the area. This booklet has been translated into Polish, Portuguese, Czech and Slovak. It provides a short introduction to the geographical location of Wrexham, a list of local services (dentists, doctors and schools) and guidance on searching for jobs and accommodation. It also contains contact details of relevant organisations.

In accordance with the inclusion agenda (referred to as *The One Wrexham agenda*), the police and fire service have also provided information leaflets in different languages. These have included home safety precautions, as fire has proved a major concern in some areas with regard to HMOs. Some of this work has been initiated by staff at the local fire station, whilst the Welsh Assembly Government has also provided some posters and leaflets. The local authority has provided information on refuse collection and recycling in several languages.

Accommodation

Some local residents hold misconceptions about migrant workers' entitlements to social housing. Some members of the host community said that the increase in migrant workers was adding pressure to housing services but this was contradicted by interviews with local authority staff. Only seven properties of local authority housing were allocated to Polish people in 2007, compared to four to white Portuguese residents and 721 to people identifying themselves as White British.

Migrant workers do not seem to experience any significant problems in accessing the private rented housing market. For example, many people had already organised accommodation before entering the UK or had informal arrangements to lodge with family members already living in Wrexham.

Health

Although most newcomers are aware of dentists' and doctors' surgeries in the area, many felt less sure of how best to access health services. A guide to health services in Wrexham was due to be released in other languages; until now, advice on this has been provided on an ad hoc basis and with little consistency (although the Wrexham information booklet contains Health Service information).. Most migrant workers reported that they have typically relied on information from other migrants or asked representatives from the voluntary sector.

Education

Interviews with local authority staff showed that the education sector has experienced a significant impact of migration. It was reported by the local authority that the numbers of children from migrant worker families peaked in 2005/06 but growth has now begun to slow down and become more manageable. Schools are now more confident in dealing with pupils from Poland and Portugal; the majority of whom attend Roman Catholic schools.

"In our biggest school we have about 65 pupils now who are mainly Poles or Portuguese and that takes a lot of support really." (public sector)

Community issues

The Multi-agency Community Cohesion Co-ordination Group has identified "the urgent need to work more closely with the indigenous population to facilitate integration and community cohesion across all strands of diversity" (WCBC, 2007). The CPP provides a range of services which seek to assist migrant workers to integrate into the community. First, they help them to organise among themselves by providing support to establish their own community organisations and support mechanisms. Second, it provides a drop-in Information and Advocacy service for three days a week. Third, it provides support to agencies working with migrant workers and organises training for agencies working with migrant workers.

Overall

- This research was not able to provide better estimates of numbers of migrant workers because of the lack of local administrative sources which recorded if someone was a migrant worker.
- The research did provide useful data on local patterns of migration, including changes over time, demands on services, and responses by local authorities, statutory organisations, and voluntary organisations.
- The research also examined the pressure on some services that had arisen, such as provision for children whose first language is not English or Welsh, the need to inspect Houses of Multiple Occupation, and the need for translation.
- The research also provided the perspective and experience of migrant workers themselves.
- Racial harassment, reported from some areas, mainly consisted of verbal abuse.
- Migrant workers were mainly employed in low paid, jobs, such as food processing, that were often not attractive to non migrants, and worked long hours.

Guidance for local authorities on developing better estimates of numbers of migrant workers is in chapter 7. This includes examples of how data from different sources can be combined. In Southampton, Schools Census and WRS data were used to provide a good estimate of the number of A8 migrants living there.